

Placenta zine
c/o Rosa-Maria Didonato
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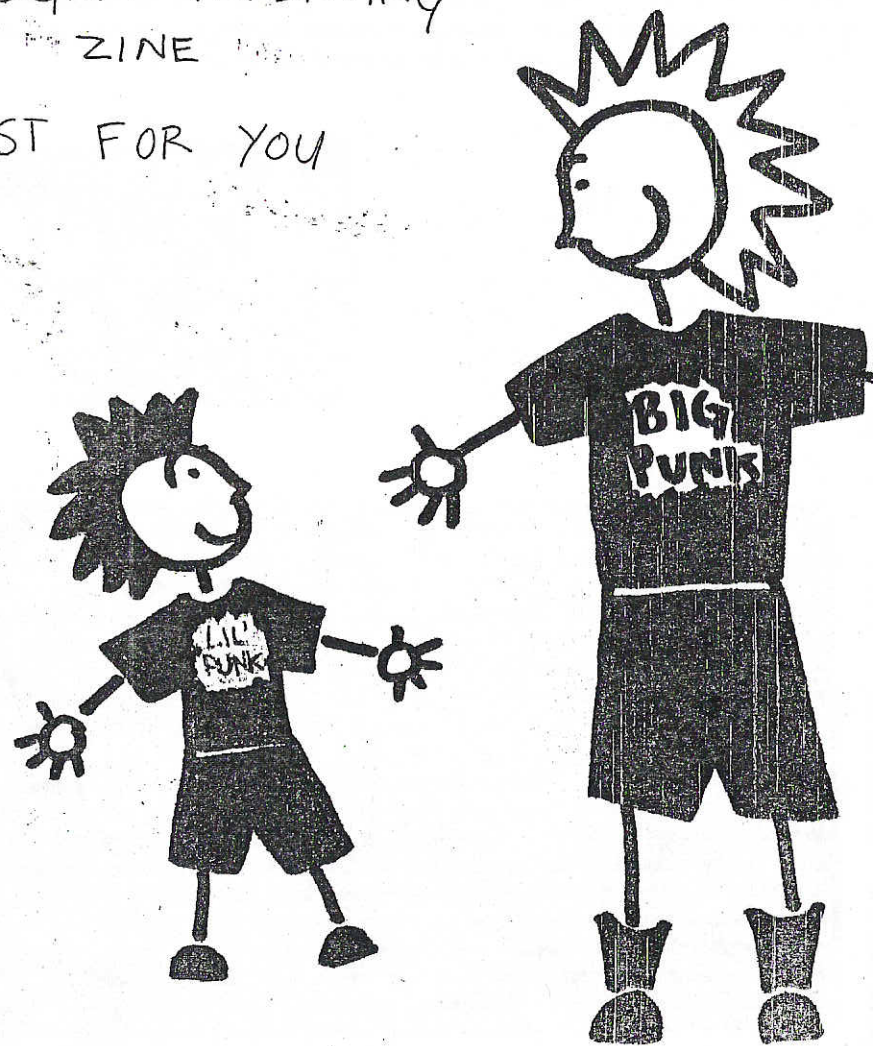
Artwork by Olaf Valer

PLACENTA #1

PUNK PARENTS UNITE!!

SEPT 2002

A PUNK ROCK/
VEGAN PARENTING
ZINE
JUST FOR YOU



Welcome to Placenta #1!

Oh, so it's finally done. I've been working on this issue diligently for a while now and think I did all right. It's hard to do this stuff with an infant around, I find myself cutting and pasting in the wee hours when I should be fast asleep. I've been trying to make it as interesting and original as possible to keep my low, sleep-deprived and distracted attention span peeked. I hope you enjoy it (or it at least provides good toilet material) - and any suggestions you have for future issues are greatly appreciated.

See the inside back cover for information on submitting articles, etcetera. I love mail, I love letters, I love submissions! And stay tuned for issue #2, I'm shooting for Mid-December or so. We're fixing to go on tour in October, so hopefully #2 is packed with punk rock infant touring advice and musings. Taking a 4 1/2 month old on tour is going to be, for lack of a better word, an adventure.

Rosa-Maria
Placenta Zine



PUNK

Punk is criticism against the world order created by God. Many punk bands promote anarchy. The thought behind anarchy as a political system is that it will plunge the world into chaos for Satan to take over. There is also a political side to punk that can be both right- or leftwing extremist. The music is characterized by shrieking vocals and bad guitar sounds. The music sounds the way it does partly to disguise lacking musical prowess, but also to describe the chaos that is sought after. Violence, racism and drugs are very frequently occurring within punk. It is frequent for punks to comb their hair into a so-called cocks crest. The cock's crest symbolises a sharp knife that is pointed towards heaven to wound God. Many punks wear leather jackets covered by sharp studs and satanic propaganda. A shirt with a cross with a line drawn over it and the text 'Bad Religion' occurs frequently among young punks. The so-called "peace sign", or Nero's cross which is the correct name, is a cross where the arms have been bent downwards to symbolize the demise of Christianity. This symbol accompanied by an A (symbolizes the Antichrist and anarchy) is often represented on the cover of records and shirts. Examples of bands: Offspring and Exploited from A Parent's Guide to the Youth's Music by Rigor Mortenson, http://www.minefields.org/y1/guide_to_youth_music.htm

PLACENTA WANTS YOU!

WRITE FOR PLACENTA ZINE!

I am continuously looking for essays, articles, recipes, photos, comics, DIY tips, etc. related to parenting and the punk community... Save the poetry though - generally I'm not a fan (sorry). Also, for issue #2, I am looking for suggested books to read to vegetarian children (deadline 11/30/02). I'll send you a free copy of the issue your writing appears in! Send submissions to the address below or via e-mail to placentazine@yahoo.com. I accept typed or handwritten submissions; handwritten submissions in the 1/2 page format will be left that way.

YOU WANT PLACENTA?

ORDER YOUR OWN COPY!

Send \$2 cash or stamps + \$.60 stamps or \$3 PPD* to:

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c/o Rosa-Maria DiDonato
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*Bulk rates are available. Contact me for more info.

If you would like to distro Placenta or be notified when the next issue is out, send an email to placentazine@yahoo.com.

- ☐ I love Placenta! I would like to pre-order issue #2 for the special price of \$2 cash, ppd.
- ☐ I really love Placenta! I would like to contribute to the copies-and-postage-are-expensive fund by donating cash or stamps.
- ☐ I think this zine sucks and I want in no way to be part of it. Screw you Placenta!

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Placenta Online <http://www.geocities.com/placentazine>

PUNK PARENT RESOURCE PAGE

On the World Wide Web

PUNK PARENTS UNITE!!

- ❖ Punk-Parents E-Group, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PUNK-PARENTS> A list for people in the punk community that have children.
- ❖ Punk Parents Swap, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/punk_parents_swap the place for punk parents to post their needs as well as things they have to give to help out fellow punk parents and their young. ex) clothing, toys, books, furniture, car seats, records, etc....
- ❖ Anarchist Parenting, <http://www.anarchistparenting.com> Applying the theories of anarchy to parenting, lots of good information. Also, an anarchist parenting e-group.
- ❖ <http://www.mamatron.org> Message board for moms who feel like they're from another planet. Also a thread for dads.
- ❖ Punk Parenting Headquarters, <http://go.to/parenting> Kind of outdated information as the site hasn't been updated in a while. Still a lot of links, etc.
- ❖ <http://www.mamaphonic.com> Message board spawned by the Hip Mama family. Threads for zine-making and music-making mamas and calls for submissions for other zines.
- ❖ <http://www.mommyx.com> From rocker to mama, one woman's site. Lots of links and reads about being the wife to a touring musician, as well as a mother.
- ❖ The DiDonato Files http://www.geocities.com/dfi_clan Our family website. Links to my personal pages, too.

If you have any additions or would like your website listed here, please send an email with the link to placentazine@yahoo.com.

Other Parenting/Mamahood Zines of Interest

SUPPORT DIY PUBLISHING! AND UNDERGROUND COMMUNITIES!

- ❖ Yard Wide Yarns: Maximum Rock 'N Roll's "My Mama Wears Combat Boots" Articles, all compiled into a neat zine format by the author, Jessica Mills. \$1. Contact Jessica @ yardwideyarns@hotmail.com.
- ❖ Hausfrau: a collection of essays, poetry, etc. related to being a mom. Contact Kathy Lopez at leakyandsnort@yahoo.com or send \$2 plus .60 postage to Hausfrau, PO Box 484, Hoboken, NJ, 07030.
- ❖ Miranda: Completely written by Kate Haas, a perzine about motherhood and other adventures, including recipes and reviews. \$2 ppd. to Kate Haas, 3510 SE Alder St. Portland OR 97214
- ❖ Hip Mama: You really don't know about Hip Mama yet? For Real? Visit <http://www.hipmama.com> or <http://www.girlmom.com> for the scoop.
- ❖ Snake Pit: OK, so it's not at all in any way about parenting, but occasionally Eva and her family make an appearance. A 3-panel daily comic about Ben's life working in a record store and getting stoned. E-mail Ben at threeinverted9s@hotmail.com.

If you would like your zine listed here, send me a copy for swap!

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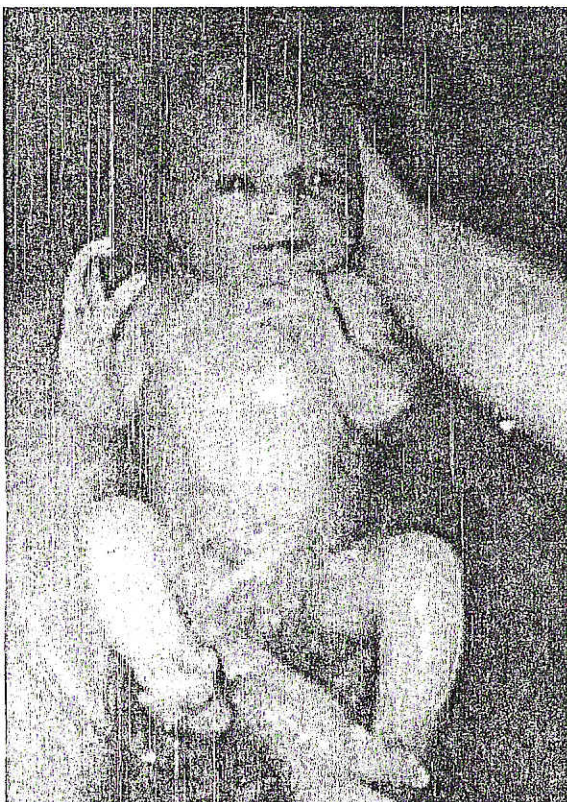
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SEND ME MAIL! Let me know what you think. Address on inside back cover.

**For ordering information, see inside back cover.

Back Cover Art by Alain Valet in Belgium, <http://www.artbabyart.com/valet>

Olympia Zine Library



Eva in an herb bath, less than one hour old

EVA'S HOMEBIRTH STORIES

When Eva was born, David and I both wrote our own versions of her birth as soon as possible. We wanted to preserve the memories of it all, as they were, fresh and new in our minds (I can hardly remember labor and birth now). Two very different versions of the same, ordinary event follow.

The Birth of Eva By Rosa-Maria

I'm writing this story four days after the birth of my sweet daughter, Eva Maria. Already, I can feel the story changing with my emotions, so I'm trying to get this out before my memory becomes too distorted. Here it goes:

On the evening of Friday, May 17th, I started having some contractions. They were coming pretty close together and were fairly strong, so I got my hopes up that it was really labor. As I had predicted my entire pregnancy, my "due" date had come and gone a week ago and I was eager to meet my baby. I was sick of people calling and asking if I'd had "that baby" yet. I wasn't dealing with the contractions well and wasn't very well rested. I threw up once and they subsided some, and then I threw up again and they completely stopped. I went to bed and cried when I told David that they had stopped- I really wanted to that to be "it". We missed Star Wars and everything, and we didn't even get to have a baby.

I spent Saturday just sulking and generally feeling crappy. We went out Saturday night but I was kind of in a bad mood and uncomfortable, so we came home early. Sunday I felt sore all over my insides and generally bruised and beaten up. I took some homeopathic Arnica which seemed to

COOK GOOD FOOD!

Both these recipes are cheap, easy, and freeze well. I made the chili in early labor with Eva and ate it during the first week after she was born. Make them in the biggest pot you have (at least 4 quarts) and serve them with bread to make them stretch even further. YUUUUMM!

Chili for the Masses

Serves about 8

****Saute in some olive oil until soft:**

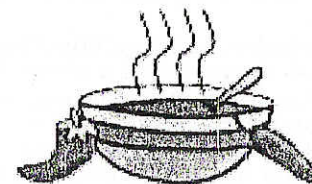
1 onion, chopped
A couple cloves garlic, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
1 bell pepper, chopped
Some chopped peppers if you like it spicy

****Add in:**

6 c. cooked/canned beans of any kind with their liquid
1-28 oz can diced tomatoes
1-6 oz can tomato paste
1-12 oz can corn
¾ c dry pearl barley
2 tbsp. Chili powder
1 tbsp. Cumin
2 tbsp. Curry powder

Soy Sauce, salt, pepper, and other spices to taste

****Simmer on medium-low for about an hour or so, stirring it up often so it doesn't burn at the bottom. Add water or vegetable stock while cooking if necessary.**



Chunky Vegetable Soup for the Masses

Serves about 6

****Combine in a pot:**

2 potatoes, scrubbed and cubed
2 onions, chopped
1 carrot, sliced
2 stalks celery, sliced
½ bag frozen greens, such as collards or spinach
1 c. pearl barley
2 bay leaves
2 tsp. Salt
6 c. water

****Bring to a boil and simmer for about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, core 3 tomatoes.**

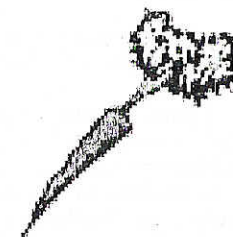
****Put the tomatoes in the water and boil about a minute or so, so that you can take the skins off easily. Cut up the tomatoes and add them to the boiling veggies, along with 2 c tomato juice**

****Simmer about 20 minutes. Then add:**

6-10 cloves garlic, chopped
1 zucchini, halved and sliced
½ lb. Tofu, cubed
2 tbsp. Soy sauce

Spices such as celery seed, rosemary, dill, thyme, salt & pepper to taste

****Simmer another 10 minutes or so**



TOP 5 ALBUMS TO LISTEN TO WITH LITTLE HUMANS

NOTE: Placenta Zine does not necessarily endorse these choices. ☺

1. "The Bottle Let Me Down" (hands down, the all time greatest kid's compilation CD!)
2. "Free To Be You And Me," Marlo Thomas & Friends
3. "Flood," They Might Be Giants
4. "Nine Objects of Desire," Suzanne Vega
5. Any type of drumming music

-Lisa Loveland

1. Bitchin' - "Tight Style, Night Life"
2. Against Me! - "Is reinventing Axl Rose"
3. Hot Water Music - "No Division"
4. Citizen Fish - "Active Ingredients"
5. V/A - "20 Bands Trash 20 Songs to find the way to Sesame Street"

-Jessica Mills

1. shonen knife "712"
2. anything by King Kong
3. devo "duty now for the future"
4. cub self-titled cd
5. fyp "finish your popcorn"

-Ben Snakepit

1. Devo - Duty Now for the Future
Fun, upbeat anthems for a world gone soft. Also devoid of the banal imagery of their earlier work ("they'd all trade their brains for one taste of her toilet water").
2. Ween - Pure Guava
Much of it already sounds like kid's music. Some explanation may be needed for older toddlers as to what "Touch My Tooter" means, but you can lie.
3. Beach Boys - Pet Sounds
Extremely well-crafted pop songs with universal kid appeal.
4. Edvard Grieg - the Peer Gynt Suite
"Mozart for Babies"? Not my baby. Maybe his Requiem once in a great while. If you're going to expose your child to classical music, at least make it something good. Peer Gynt has your tragic adagio (Ase's Death), your "scary, but in a cartoon way" piece (Hall of the Mountain King), your oat-bran cereal commercial (Morning) and so much more. Leave that fruity Mozart crap for yuppie parents in their SUV's so they can raise their kids to be corporate accountants. No thanks.
5. Beatles - Abbey Road
If you can handle "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" getting stuck in your head (what an oddly fitting title), you're in good shape. "Golden Slumbers" and "Sun King" are nice lullabies, and the ending medley of side 2 is always a good time.

-David DiDonato

help a little, at least so I could get some rest. Monday morning when I woke up I was in a little bit of a better mood, but not much. I took a nice long shower and let everything just go down the drain, and suddenly I felt better. I brushed my hair, made some food to put in the freezer and spent the day talking to my baby, enjoying the end of my pregnancy and watching my belly full of baby move around while she was still inside. David had talked to his uncle Greg earlier in the day and he mentioned that he and his wife had a birth story in Spiritual Midwifery, so I got out my copy of it to see if it had it in there. It didn't, so I called my midwife, Susie, and asked her if she had an older copy. She said she would look and see, and asked me how I was feeling. I told her I felt fine, and after a long weekend, I was really comfortable just waiting it out for this baby to come. I went to bed in a good mood and got some good sleep, curled up next to my husband.

I woke up at 4:30AM on Tuesday, the 21st, with some really light contractions. They were waking me up every fifteen minutes or so but were no big deal. When David woke up to go to work, I told him I had been having some contractions and then sent him on his way. We were both excited I think but I kept telling myself that it wasn't "it" because I didn't want to get my hopes up and then get disappointed again. I went about my day as usual, in a happy mood. I started having some bloody show but I still didn't want to think that anything was going to happen. At least I knew it would be soon. I spent the day feeling the contractions and smiling. By the time David came home from work, they were about ten minutes apart and still very light, although they were getting stronger. We ate dinner together, and then I sat on the couch and picked up the copy of Spiritual Midwifery that I had left out the day before. I hadn't read the stories in a long time, so I began reading them then. Although it is super hippied-out, it was really nice to read about staying loose during labor and loving on your partner and all of that, and it reminded me that I just needed to stay relaxed and let things flow. I felt kind of glowing, like I had a giant secret, and very in love with things at that point. I was enjoying the contractions when they came. I hoped this would turn into labor - but was still convinced it wouldn't.

At some point around 8 o'clock (we were never paying attention to the time so all of these are guesses) we went for a walk to the park down the street. We took it slow and it was nice to be near David, everything felt amazing. The weather was perfect; it was a spectacular night for a walk. I remember thinking that it was a wonderful night to be having a baby. We swung on the swings for a little bit until that was uncomfortable so we sat on the bench together. A stranger looked at me and said, "wow, you look like you are about ready to pop" and I just smiled. If he only knew, I thought. I

could've cuddled all night on that bench but David was ready to go so we headed back home. On the way back, we picked up these awesome chairs that somebody was throwing out down the street. I had to stop once for a contraction- we must've been a pretty funny sight.

I ate some yogurt and hung out for a while, and noticed the contractions were getting stronger and closer together- maybe about seven minutes apart. I got in the bath to see if they would lighten up a little, but they seemed to be getting stronger, although they didn't hurt and I could talk through them. After a while I thought they might be coming every four minutes but wasn't sure. I stopped counting then. If it was labor, it was labor, and if it wasn't, it wasn't... but I still thought that it wasn't. I was afraid that if I admitted to myself that I might be in labor that the contractions would stop like they did the Friday before. At some point after that I got David away from whatever he was doing and asked him to get in the bath with me because the contractions were getting stronger. He was a little apprehensive at first but then obliged me. I wanted to be close to him, and I also needed something to lean on because our bathtub is pretty uncomfortable. I poured water on my belly during the contractions.

From that point on, I was either in the tub, sitting on the toilet or walking around during the contractions. If David tried to talk to me during one I usually shushed him, but I could still talk through them. I had to remind myself to open up and relax, but I still thought this wasn't the real thing. He asked me some time if this was labor, and I just looked at him and said, "I hope so" and left it at that. David went to bed to get some rest and I told him I'd wake him up when I needed him. At about 1:00 they were coming really strong, and I just sat on the toilet through them and tried to get myself to relax. I decided I couldn't get through them on my own at about 1:30.

They were too intense... and I still thought it was early labor, if even labor at all. I woke David up and said, "I think it's time to call Susie [the midwife], I'm having some trouble getting through these" or something to that extent. He sprang out of bed and got dialing, and Susie was here within a half-hour or so. I wasn't sure about how I was going to feel about having

RM & Eva - 3 days old



ROCKER MOM VS. SOCCER MOM

What Makes Me Punk

The underground punk rock community these days is not so underground, and is filled with many sub-communities of kids that consider themselves punk rock. Along with this comes snotty elitist attitudes of people that think that I'm not punk enough or not the right kind of punk to be part of their crew, which to me is pretty much anti-punk. In the beginning days of the punk culture, punk was simply the kids that didn't fit in anywhere else and banded together to do their own thing. Now I wonder where I might fit in.

I don't consider myself punk because of the way that I dress. I wear the clothes that I want to, and, since my days of being a mom, that sometimes consists of pajama pants and an old t-shirt all day long. My hair is occasionally dyed black, but I have never once had a mohawk or other stereotypical punk rock haircut. My tattoos are hidden and my piercings are empty holes in my ears and two very tiny studs in my nose. I am definitely not punk by my appearance.

I do like to listen to the punk rock, but I can't claim my punk status from that. I don't know much about it. Some days I also like to listen to metal, and other days, I've been known to listen to some classic rock or a myriad of other things not classified as "punk". So, I can't consider myself punk because of the music I choose to listen to.

I consider myself punk because of the way that I think. To me, that is what being punk is about. From questioning authority to giving a fuck about what I do and not what people think, I am punk. Having a child has forced me to become more radical and more concrete in my views: in essence, having a child is the most punk rock thing I've ever done. Suddenly, community and activism are much more important, my distrust in the government and general outrage at what goes on in this country, in this world, stronger than ever. Having a child has given me more reason than I've ever had before to get mad about what's going on and want to try and do something about it, in whatever steps I can.

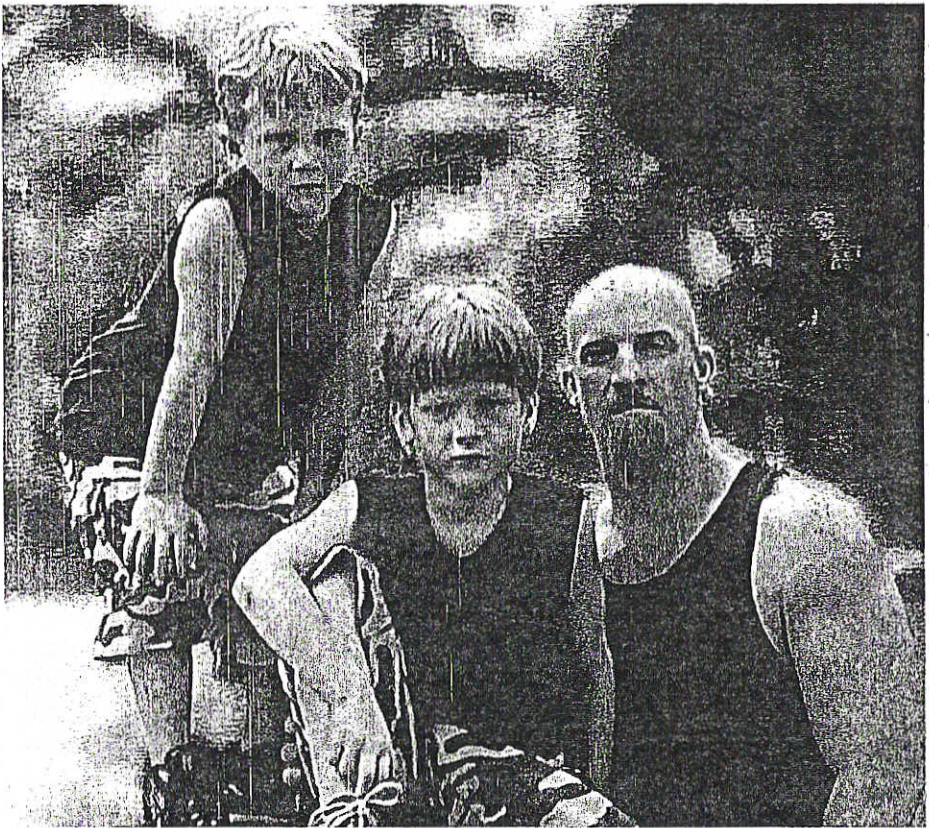
I am trying to raise my daughter to have an open mind, question authority (even if that means questioning her father and I), and think outside the mainstream. To be aware of options and what's around her. I can only hope that she appreciates it.

Hopefully, Rocker Mom vs. Soccer Mom (or dad, of course) will be a regular section of Placenta. If you would like to write a short essay on why you consider yourself punk, how you raise your children in your own punk rock ethic, what punk is to you, blah blah blah, please send it in.

course, watched as he recounted the swing to everyone near the dugout. I'd have given anything to keep him in that moment a while longer.

How much work went into that one swing? You wouldn't believe me if I told you. That said, it's never once felt like a job. For the most part it's just been me and my kid having fun tossin' a ball and takin' a few hacks. I'm gonna miss that one day, but right now I'm loving every minute of it.

-Kenny Long is the father of four kids, of which on any given day he dearly loves three and has a problem with the other. By nature, kids are curious and push the boundaries of parental forgiveness. With that thought in mind it should come as no surprise that, at the very minimum, one of his will be up to no good.



Kenny and the Boys: Ryan and Aren

Susie and her apprentice there at the birth, because I really wanted it to be David and I, and we had considered having an unassisted birth. But at this point, I was really glad she was on her way because I felt like I needed some help to stay in control if I was going to be doing this for much longer. I really like Susie- she is a friend at this point and more than just my midwife. She called her apprentice, Rachel, to come here when she got here. Rachel had only been to one birth before, she was a new apprentice, and I was a little bit nervous about that.

When Susie got there she asked me some questions and I had some contractions. She offered David some suggestions to help me out and reminded me to keep my breathing and noises low and not high, which is what I needed. I kept reminding myself to "just relax". I didn't think I wanted to have any vaginal exams during labor, but when she asked me if I wanted to be checked I said yes. I thought that for sure I was only three centimeters- maybe five at the most- and if she told me that I would know I was making this all up and could go back to sleep and wait for the real thing, and Susie could go home and get some rest. Well, I was 8 centimeters and 95% effaced at that point. Holy shit! I'm definitely not making this up - this really is labor.

Susie and David rushed around and got the things from her car and made the bed and such with lightning speed in between the contractions. Rachel still hadn't come yet, but everything was progressing wonderfully. When

Post-Partum Herb Bath

Mom and Baby soak in this herb bath as soon as possible after birth to promote healing of tissues and avoid infection. Save the herbs after the first go-round to use once more, or make a sitz bath with them. You can have the herbs and garlic ready before the birth and put them in a Ziploc bag in the freezer or cool, dry place..

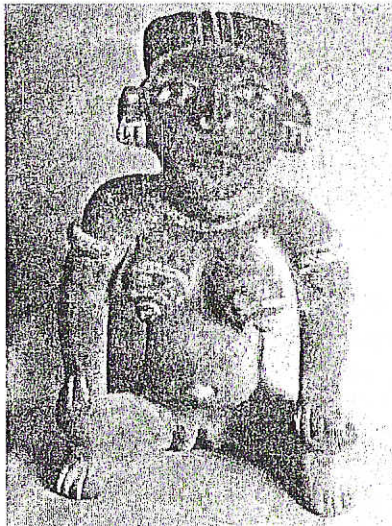
Boil **water** with ½ cup **sea salt**. Pour over ¼ c **comfrey** (promotes healing and cell growth), ¼ c **rosemary** (antiseptic, reduces swelling), ¼ c **uva ursi leaf** (heals urinary tract), ¼ c **shepherd's purse** (promotes clotting), 1 whole bulb chopped **garlic** (antiseptic), and ¼ c **lavender** and/or **chamomile** (smells good, calms nerves). Steep for about ½ hour or longer (you can put them on to steep at the beginning of labor and use them after birth if you remember). Add to a full bath of warm water and soak.

Susie said where I was at I think something clicked inside David's brain that yes, we really were going to have a baby now and he got into this new mode. He held my hands through the contractions and we said I love you a lot. He got a cold wet wash cloth for me that I wrang out over me. He got a bowl for me to throw up in. He pressed on my back when he could (I sat on the toilet through most of the contractions). I just kept looking at him and thinking how amazing he was, as the contractions were getting harder and harder. Susie was reminding me how to breathe and work through them.

At about 3:00 I started feeling pushy through the height of the contractions. I had a little bit of a cervical lip, and I was trying to get rid of it I think. After "melting away" that lip inside my head and pushing a little, the urge to push came on really strong. I had to push. I wanted to be on the toilet more than anything but knew I

couldn't have my baby there (our bathroom is the size of a matchbox, there's barely enough room for David to stand in there with me). I got on all fours, I got in a side-lying position, I turned around, cursed the god-damned toilet, and tried every position imaginable with David and Susie constantly rearranging the chux pads under me (poor things, I was hard to keep up with). Susie asked if I wanted her to get the birth stool and I said yes. I tried that and didn't like it - but felt kind of bad because I made her go all the way down the stairs to her car to get it! I pushed mostly on all fours or leaning on the birth ball, and then in kind of an upright semi-sitting side-lying weird position that felt good. I got leg cramps and Susie gave me homeopathic Magnesium Sulfate for that. I was swearing and apologized for swearing. I remembered to apologize to our neighbor, Roger, for being so loud, because I was being LOUD. I was thinking it was a great thing that everyone in the complex knew I was having a homebirth.

Eventually, the baby was crowning. David said he thought she was a girl and Susie agreed she thought the same thing. I had thought it was a boy or leaned more towards having a boy my entire pregnancy until the end, and now I was thinking she was probably a girl too. I wanted to get her out so I could know for sure! She was crowning for a long time, very slowly coming. I looked over at David and he looked really white. I asked him if he was



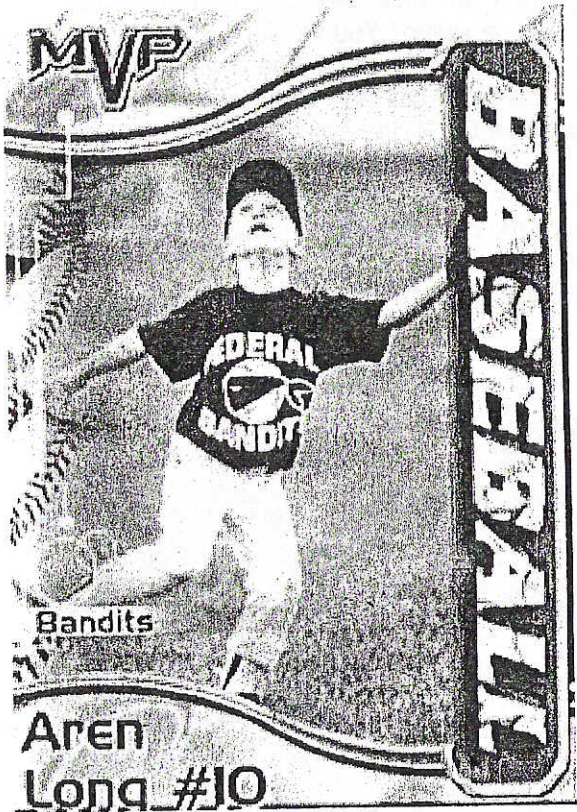
Chicks Dig the Long Ball

By Kenny Long

So I'm sitting in the stands amidst a drizzly rain, watching the end of a baseball game that for all practical purposes was decided long ago, when it happened.

One out in the bottom of the sixth inning of a six inning game. Our team hopelessly behind, and field conditions worsening by the minute. That's when Aren walked to plate in a way only an 8 year old under the same circumstance can. Smiling, full of excitement, and with a genuine sense of purpose.

'Strike One' boomed the voice from the loud speaker, 'Strike Two' it repeated a few seconds



later. What happened next though was a thing of beauty, and something I'll remember for the rest of my life. He asked for time out, stepped away from the batter's box, smiled at me as he took a few practice swings, then stepped back in.

KABOOM was the sound of bat hitting ball on the next pitch, and with that one mighty swing Aren took center stage. I watched the flight of the ball for a brief second before realizing what he'd just done, then I turned my attention to him. He was rounding first base when the baseball left the park and the look on his face was priceless. Yeah, my boy had just hit a home run, and at that point everything was right with the world.

His team mates went wild, his coach looked stunned, and craziest of all -- parents were congratulating me like I was the one who'd just homered. All I wanted to do though was enjoy my kid enjoying his moment.

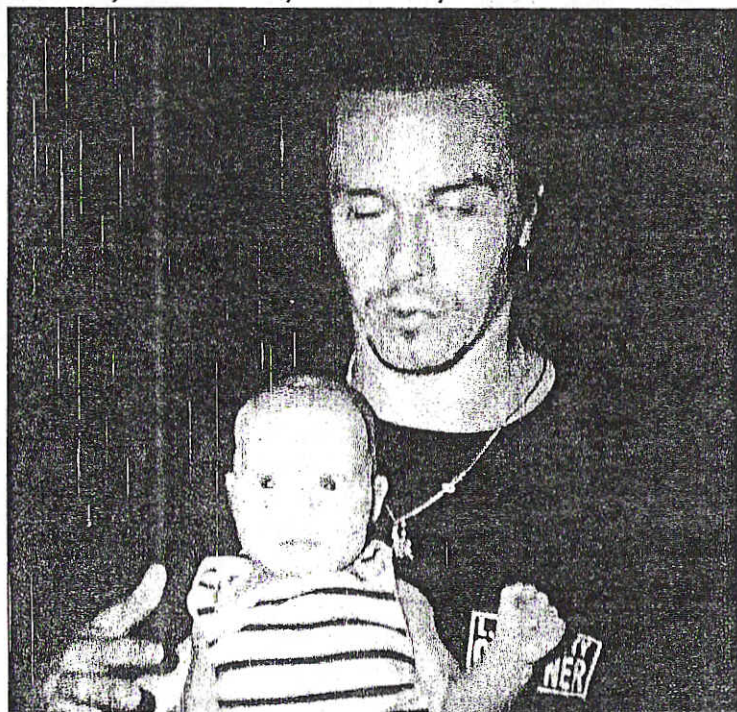
I watched as his friends piled on him after he crossed home plate. Watched him as he made sure his mother and I saw the whole thing. And of

AWWWWW, her first little rock star experience and she's only two months old. I can't wait until she's a rebellious teenager in the Young Republicans Club and we can embarrass the Hell out of her with that photo.

The thing about taking your kid (especially your baby) to shows is that people want to tell you their opinion. Like some chick that was dressed and acting like a little groupie slut, hanging off of Mike Patton, told me she didn't think it was OK for Eva to be there. I told her flat out, go get your own baby then you can make its decisions. I am not going to endanger my child. She is very good about letting us know when she is going to get pissed off, she likes to people-watch and be part of things, and she normally goes to bed at around 1am. I don't bring her into smoky unventilated environments, I put earplugs in her ears, I stand way far away with her. I don't drink and I don't smoke. I carry her in the sling so that strangers don't want to touch her as much (I can't stand that). If somebody wants to try and make a decision for

MY child for ME, they can go fuck themselves and I'll be the first to tell them so.

I know that as she gets older it's going to get harder and harder to bring her to shows and other social events. For right now, however, it's working for us. She's into it and we enjoy showing her things, and we get to get out. My baby is the punkest baby ever. I'm a proud mama.



The Big Picture: Eva and Mr. Patton himself

okay and he replied with "I'm fine" or something.... Later I found out that he thought that the baby's head was too soft and she must not have a skull! He was worrying about what we were going to do if our baby didn't have a skull, of all things. It burned like Hell as she was crowning, but felt good at the same time, because I knew my baby was finally coming.

Eventually her head was almost all the way out and I instinctively panted out the rest of it. Relief! The cord was wrapped tightly around her neck and we couldn't slip it over her head, it was too cone-shaped. Instead Susie put it over her shoulders and she was born through it as I pushed her out; first her shoulders then her entire body swooshed out of me. Twenty-four hours after the first light contraction, about six hours of active labor and then an hour and a half of pushing, at 4:31 in the morning on May 22, 2002. She



came out kind of blue and shell shocked, a little confused at being born and pretty floppy. She had a lot of mucous in her mouth so we suctioned her with the bulb syringe, and by one minute old she had pinked up nicely and was already nursing. I was cooing at her, amazed, she was so beautiful and perfect! She was perfect! David looked the most amazing I had seen him, so into it (especially since he saw that she did have a skull, I'm sure). We kissed and I checked and saw she was a girl, and then I did a recheck just to make sure. Eva! You're an Eva! You look like an Eva! You are so beautiful!

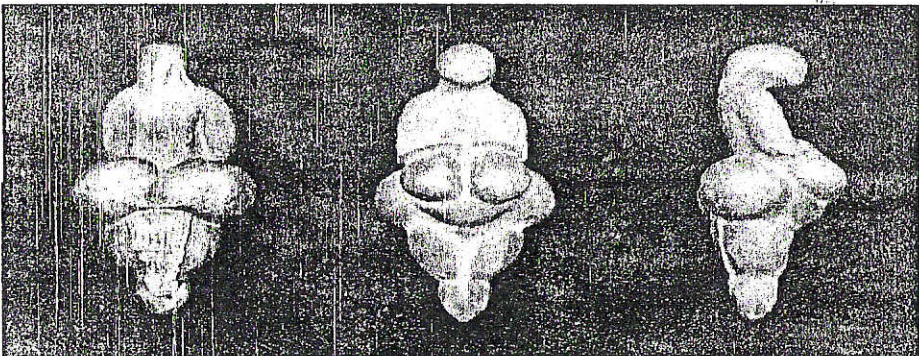
I bled out a little after the birth but knew it wouldn't be a problem. I took homeopathic Phosphorus and either that stopped it or it just stopped on it's own, I don't know. We cut the cord after it stopped pulsing and just looked at her, and amazed at my belly, which was now so much smaller. We did it. We had our baby girl.

Susie prepared an herb bath for me and Eva and we soaked a bit, which felt great. Then we snuggled into bed and hung out, our new little family. Everything was perfect. We were all high from it. All I could do was stare at her, she has the most amazing presence and the longest fingers and toes and looks a lot like her Daddy. I know almost every new parent will say this, but she is the most beautiful baby I have ever seen. I have never felt more in love before, both with her and her father, my husband. He is so proud of

her and they are so sweet together, I find myself falling more and more in love with them each day... It's only been four (well, five now) days since she was born but it feels like she's been with us forever. We're starting to get the hang of this parenting thing. It's amazing how much different it is when it's *your* baby... all the work I have done with mothers postpartum, etc. and I still have so many questions and wonder if things are "normal". They are, and she is. We are so lucky to have her here. Our little miracle baby.

Susie's apprentice, Rachel, never showed up for the birth. It made it a lot harder for Susie, but I think it helped things out for me, because things felt a lot more intimate, since I have known Susie for a long time and didn't really know Rachel, and I was nervous about her coming to the birth anyway. David got to have his hands on his daughter as she came out, and I pulled her up onto my belly with the both of them. I didn't tear although I do have a few "skid marks" which burn. I feel very proud that I did this without any help from the medical world/industry- I didn't have tests, I wasn't poked and prodded, I grew her in my womb, I went into labor on my own accord. She was born twelve days "late" but was perfectly on time, with ample vernix on her to prove it. We birthed her in the comfort of our own home- I can't imagine it any other way, and I am so thankful I wasn't drugged and my child wasn't drugged as she came out. I make the milk that she drinks. She is amazing. We are a very small, very new, and very happy family.

[It turns out later that our neighbor Roger heard everything that was going on and was so excited that our baby was being born that he was waiting outside his apartment to hear the cries and smoking cigarettes. All of our neighbors have come up to visit. Everyone's pretty sure that she is the first baby born at the Conquistador (our apartment complex). We're planning on planting her placenta in the courtyard (well, what else are we going to do with it??).]



This is in no way an exhaustive list. It could go on and on. So, please let me know if you have any other cost-saving parent ideas! And if anyone criticizes you for not buying "only the best" for your baby, or for buying "used" things for your "new" baby, tell them that you would rather be with your baby than having to be at work extra hours just to have enough money to buy those things that the baby doesn't really need anyway.

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Rock Star Experience #1 (Lightning Bolt Show 7/26/02)

We took Eva to the Rah Bras/Lightning Bolt/some other bands not worth mentioning/the Locust show at Emo's last night. She slept through Lightning Bolt, which if you have ever heard them you'll know, is quite a task because they are LOUD (must have been some really good earplugs). They were awesome, although I didn't get to see them, only hear them, because they play on the floor as usual and I was not about to bring my baby up close to see them. They rocked hard. It was an outside show so I just stood far away. We had to leave before the Locust played because she was getting cranky and we didn't want to push it. That's okay because we really wanted to see Lightning Bolt, and the Rah Bras because they are David's friends from Richmond, although we showed up just as the Rah Bras were finishing up. And I saw the Locust the last time they came around. We did find out later that Lightning Bolt played again after the Locust which we would have liked to see, but you have to pay attention to your kid.

The highlight of the night though was that Mike Patton (Faith No More, Mr. Bungle, Tomahawk, you know) was there hanging out and Miss Eva got her picture taken with him. Now, if I didn't have my baby with me, I would have just been excited to see him at a show and wouldn't have even gone up to him, but since she was there, I had to go get her picture taken with him.



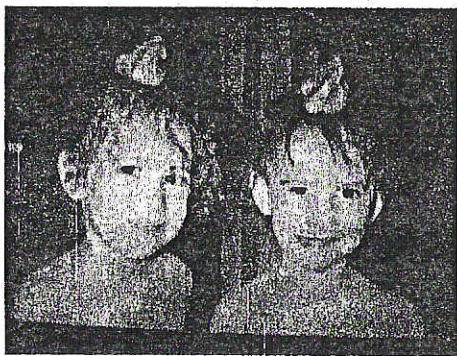
Eva sleeping through Lightning Bolt (and Stacey and RM)

Covers vary in size and style and can always be found used, for cheap. If you can't find the covers in a second hand store, then believe it or not, you can find them for sale on an Internet auction site. I was surprised to be able to get five covers that sell for \$15 each brand new for only \$15 for all five. If you know how to sew, these covers are relatively easy to make yourself, too. If you soak the soiled diapers in a diaper pail and wash them every other day, it's easy to keep up with. We don't have our own washer or dryer or anything and we have been able to manage this dirty deed with only minor gross out for eleven months so far. We do use one disposable diaper a day, overnight, because it sucks to have to get up to change the baby in the middle of the night, which is what you have to do with cloth diapers because they're not full of super-absorbent chemicals like the disposables are. (Another reason to use cloth as much as you can.)

7. Feeding - Breastfeed your baby! There are numerous benefits to both you and the baby and since this column is about being thrifty, consider the fact that breastfeeding your baby will save you at least \$1000 the first year alone because you won't be buying the corporate, chemical infant formula. Ugh, the formula industry is evil, evil, evil - one of the worst global marketing schemes of all time. I sincerely sympathize with you if you are in the less than 2% who are not able to breastfeed your baby and if you are, then the organic soy based formulas are your best bet.

8. Other - You do not need a thousand, or even a dozen, special towels, blankets, burping rags or bibs. The baby is fine with a regular soft, cotton towel after bath time, just a couple

blankets and you can use any piece of cloth for a burp rag. Add one of your punk as fuck safety pins to a piece of cloth around the baby's neck & wha-la, you have a bib! You also do not need all of the chemically derived special, gentle baby soaps and detergents. Any non-toxic, eco-friendly soap will do. Especially nice is the Dr. Bronner's all-in-one baby castile soap that is scent-free. Do not perfume the baby with any supposed "baby" products, including diaper rash cream or diaper wipes that contain any ingredients that you can not pronounce. Instead of using the costly, disposable wipes, use little washcloths dampened with warm water. After using, drop them into the diaper pail along with the cloth diapers and wash them all together.



Emma-Joy and Sadie sporting Play-Doh mohawks

The Birth of Eva Maria DiDonato

By David DiDonato
(her dad)

By Tuesday, May 21st, Rosa-Maria was eleven days over-due. At 4:30 a.m., she was starting to have contractions. Not very strong contractions - as she okayed my going to work that day. By the time I got home at around 5:30 p.m., the contractions were getting stronger, but we still went out for a walk to the park. These people a few houses down were throwing away these really nice chairs so we made a mental note to get them if they were still there upon our return. Rosa-Maria was able to walk fine, if not at the quickest speed... which was fine with me, as I knew it was going to be a long night...



David & Eva, 3 days old

The contractions kept getting stronger and closer, and by 9 p.m. I asked if I could call our mid-wife. She said no, that she didn't want it to be a "false alarm." I went to bed. Given my lack of knowledge in the birthing arena, I didn't question it - but figured that it wasn't a false alarm and I should get as much rest as I could.

By 1:30 a.m., the contractions apparently were approaching the "I-can't-talk, it-hurts-too-badly" stage, and Rosa-Maria asked me to call the mid-wife. I went from being dead asleep to being on the phone in about 30 seconds. Susie, our mid-wife, seemed to be pretty asleep when I called, but arrived within the half-hour.

When Susie got there, Rosa-Maria was in what appeared to be pretty deep into the labor stage. Every 3 or so minutes, she'd run into the bathroom and sit on the toilet and either squeeze my hand or throw up. Meanwhile, Susie was feverishly getting things ready. Between two contractions, I helped her

In **1970**, the rate of **cesarean section** in hospitals across the US was **5%**. By **1990**, it was **25%**. In some parts of the country today, it is over **30%**.

Are they trying to tell us that our bodies are no longer capable of birth? Is it just a coincidence that cesarean deliveries cost twice as much as vaginal deliveries, but in much less time?

Childbirth should not be about money and convenience.

make the bed up - one regular sheet, one chux layer, one regular sheet, one chux layer. I saw an oxygen tank, and other mysterious birthing aids.

By midnight, it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep Rosa-Maria out of the bathroom. She knew that she couldn't give birth in the bathroom, and repeatedly told herself this. Eventually, the three of us convinced her to get onto the bed. The contractions seemed unbearably strong by this point.

At 1:30 a.m., Susie told Rosa-Maria that it was time to push. She told her the correct way to breathe - as more of a low, sonorous sound than the high-pitched wail. Ever conscious of etiquette, she apologized for swearing and reminded me to remind to apologize to Roger, our neighbor, for the noise.

Rosa-Maria shifted positions several times, from being on her back to all-fours to leaning over this large inflated "birth ball" to sitting on a birthing stool. The most comfortable position was sitting relatively upright,

supported by pillows, with her legs elevated. Her legs would cramp, and Susie administered a dose of magnesium sulfate to help. After about 20 minutes of pushing, Susie said she could see the head coming out.

With every push, the head would come ever so slightly further out. When it got to the point where I could see it, I looked on in horror upon seeing how soft the baby's little head was. There would be no way for it to pass through the birth canal without being crushed. I turned white, and Rosa-Maria asked me if I was okay, to which I said "Yeah." Susie kept pouring oil on the baby's head to lubricate the vaginal walls.

Finally, after about an hour and a half after the initial push, Susie said that the umbilical cord was wrapped around the baby, but she deftly moved it to the side. Right after that, the whole head came out. It was blue and

baby will outgrow these clothes so quickly and with little wear, you can always re-consign them in a few months! And even better than the thrift and consignment shops are people with kids older than yours! If you don't know anyone with a kid, just wait, you will definitely meet some. Don't be shy to tell them that you'd be more than happy to take any outgrown clothes off their hands. Seriously, we have had to spend almost no money on clothes for our baby and I have about five plastic bags full of clothes just waiting for her to grow into. At this rate, we won't have to buy any clothes for her until she's four. People with kids are generally generous to other people with kids. It's a great cycle to inject yourself into.

5. Toys - The same goes for toys as it does for clothes. Whatever you don't get handed down to you, you can find loads of at a second hand store. Dumpsters are a great source for toys too, as is witnessed by the little kid rocking chair, tricycle and fast food restaurant plastic wind-up junk toys we have. Seriously, toys just seem to come out of the woodwork. Family members all the way down to random neighbors and friends will constantly give you toys for your kid. And when the baby is so young, you will have more fun with the toys than he/she will! When you both get bored of a toy, be sure to re-consign it or pass it down to some other kid who you know would love to have something different to play with. Looking at the mainstream baby magazines, you will see that they want you to buy all the "right" toys at the "right" time. Don't believe the hype. Believe me, your kid will develop just fine without all the "right" toys at the "right" time. Your kid might even be better off without those age-specific developmental toys because that way, he/she can learn to decide for him/herself what's interesting without being told what they're "supposed" to be interested in.

6. Diapering - You will save gobs of money by using cloth diapers. (And not send ten miniature garbage bags full of piss and shit to the landfill every day.) They are not as much trouble as they sound. We operate with about a dozen cloth diapers, which are really just thin cotton rectangular pieces of cloth folded into eighths, and the same amount of diaper covers. These

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You got something you think we want? E-mail
placentazine@yahoo.com for more info.

is a few months old and squirming all over the place, about to flip over the side when you change his/her diaper. Just put a towel down on the bed and change the baby there.

3. Carrying and strolling - You absolutely do not need a stroller that looks like a baby Cadillac. Those monstrous strollers that have the snap-in-place carrier / car seat on top of the stroller base that also doubles as a sleeper are not only ridiculously expensive, but they're heinously ugly and besides, it's just not nice to have your little soft, fleshy bundle strapped down into hard, form fitted plastic all the time. Use a sling! These are a lot less expensive and if you don't want to buy one, all you need is a long, rectangular piece of fabric. Tie it over one of your shoulders, so it crosses your chest with the other end hanging like a little hammock under your other arm. It's nice for the baby to be snuggled tight and it's also easy to nurse the baby when he/she is already so close to the milk source. No one will even know what the baby's up to in there. "Wearing" the baby in a sling also frees your hands up so you can get some things done. Although you can tote a tot this way easily until they're well into their toddler years, you may want to give your back a break and when the baby is a few months old and able to hold its head up, a little "umbrella" stroller can usually be found at a thrift shop for under \$5. Baby backpacks are also very handy and can also easily be found used for a cheap price. It's fun to ride a bike with the baby on your back; just be sure to have a helmet on the little head! You can get an XS child's helmet and pad it out well for under \$15.

4. Clothes - Little babies only get their clothes dirty if they spit up on them or if their diaper leaks. They do not scoot or crawl for several months and they grow out of their newborn clothes very quickly. Therefore, do yourself a favor and do not buy brand new baby clothes. (Please don't fall for the Baby Talk "feature story" on pajamas. Kids do not need pajamas that include a matching stuffed animal and slippers, not to mention the matching hair ribbons!) Because of the reasons I just mentioned, thrift and consignment shops are teeming with practically brand new baby clothes. They simply grow out of them before they have a chance to wear them out. Also, since your

I use the Maya Wrap Baby Sling (see Rock Star photo, p. 25), which I love. If you go to the website, www.mayawrap.com, you can get "gently used" slings for \$10 cheaper.... Or you can just make your own like Jessica says.

motionless. After another big push, the rest of the body came out quickly, and it was all white and very still. The baby looked like one of those gnome lawn ornament statues, with a conical blue head and a white body. Susie confirmed my hunch with the "It's a girl" announcement, and stuck a little turkey-baster in her mouth, after which by some miracle, she came to life and went from a ghastly blue/white to a more human pink hue. Instead of crying, she looked around confusedly, making several different facial expressions before settling on to Rosa-Maria's breast to nurse. I called my sister, then my parents. My mom told me that it's the most emotional that she's ever heard me, but then I'd never witnessed the birth of my own child before!

-Oh, and all babies heads are soft on the way out.



The DiDonato Fam

A Lovely Saturday in the Life of Dru Blood

--7:30 AM--
Coley hits me over the head with a random toy that shares the bed with us. Is it morning already?

--8:00 AM--
Coley eats a "cookie" (actually a graham cracker) while I try to figure out what to make of our empty fridge. The boys are eating so much lately. There is no fruit in the house... no potatoes... no raisin bran... no peanut butter... no leftovers. Monk is going to flip out when he wakes up.

--8:30 AM--
Monk is flipping out because there isn't enough to eat.

--8:45 AM--
A momentary lapse in sanity causes me to consider (out loud) the possibility of going to Taco Cabana. This gets Monk to calm down... but then I remember that the last time we were there they put BACON in our potato tacos. I remind Monk of this and cools on the idea of going... which is ok by me. I convince him that a can of garbanzos will suffice and promise that I will run by the grocery store on my way home from work.

--9:00 AM--
The children play while I get ready for work.

--9:30 AM--
I leave for work. I have to be there early today for a curriculum meeting. My uberboss is already there, waiting in her car, when I arrive (she doesn't have keys). Have I mentioned how... tolerable... she has been since the 360 degree evals? I suppose that speaks a lot in her favor, in spite of the fact that she tried to weasel out of being held accountable by her boss. We talk while we're waiting for my co-worker to show up.

--10:00 AM--
Meet meet meet. Talk talk talk. Yadda yadda yadda.

--2:00 PM--
The meeting is over... the network is down... I make sure my management assistant knows what to do and go home. Stopping by the store on my way.

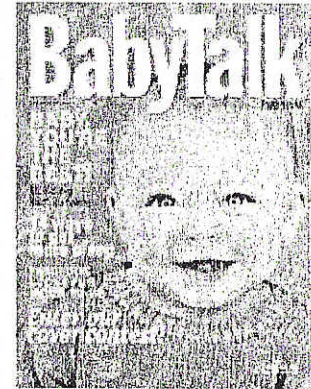
--3:00 PM--
I'm home. I walk in to find Steven laying on the couch watching PBS with Cole sleeping on his chest. When I'm done melting into a puddle on the floor, I gently grab the baby and carry him to the bedroom for his nap.



magazines in the pediatrician's waiting room. So, if you're a parent-to-be or a new parent, beware! And read on...

You absolutely do not need even half of what these corporate rags tell you that you will need! I repeat, you don't need their shit that you probably can't afford anyway! I understand that my needs will be different than yours, given the fact that we all make different lifestyle decisions. However, if you are interested in knowing how to accommodate a new little punk into your life for very little money, you might find this information useful.

I can't tell you how good I felt about my thrifty, cheap ways when I glanced at the special bonus insert, "Everything You Need For Your New Consumer," that was included inside one of the issues of Baby Talk. Thumbing through its 20 odd pages, I honestly saw almost nothing that I had needed to use during the six months that I have been a parent.

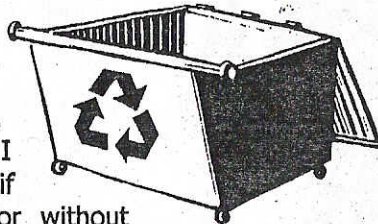


1. **Car Seat** - Even if you don't have a car, you will more than likely ride in one with your baby and for that, you need a car seat. This is the one thing that you should not get used. That's because you probably won't know if it has been in an accident, even a minor, and if it has, you shouldn't use it. Car seats can be expensive and it's usually the super duper looking ones that are more expensive and are actually the least effective. Most counties have a "Safe Kids" type program that provides you with useful, up-to-date information (which is important to know because car seats have had many manufacturer recalls) and a brand new, good quality car seat for a small fee. For example, I attended an hour long information session, paid only \$10 and walked away with a new car seat that was the exact size I needed for my baby's age and weight.

2. **"Nursery" furniture** - I laughed out loud when I saw the pages in the magazine that were titled, "Your Dream Nursery for an Affordable Couple Grand." What a fucking joke, right? Nursery, schmersery. You don't need a crib, bassinet, playpen or changing table. And you certainly don't need them to match with some kind of pastel, fluffy bunny theme. More babies die in cribs than they do when they sleep in your bed with you. My aunt offered us the crib my cousin slept in, but we declined. Sure, they raised their eyebrows a bit at the thought of our "family bed," but they got over it. We were given a bassinet and a playpen, both of which we never used because baby rejected them both immediately. My mom also gave us my old changing table, but it wasn't necessary either. It's especially ineffective once the baby

Thrifty Mama
by Jessica Mills

** This article first appeared as a column, "My Mother Wears Combat Boots," in the April 2001 issue of Maximum Rock N Roll.*



I'm a fan of free stuff. You know, the kind scored out of college students' apartment dumpsters, hand me downs and unsold yard sale goodies left out on the curb. Sometimes, I'll set out looking for stuff that I need like shelves or a toilet seat. Usually, if I'm patient, I'll find what I'm looking for without resorting to spending money to get it. It's also incredibly fun to score not particularly useful stuff just because it's free. It's the most fun to laugh about the fact that someone probably paid money, and sometimes a lot of it, for something they will have soon deposited into a trash can. In short, I take pride in being able to live fat off of typical American consumers' gluttonous habits.

So, when I found out I was pregnant, I didn't hesitate to fill out a few postage paid postcards that promised free baby products. Of course, I should have known better; free corporate marketing products are not the same as free discarded things. The corporate stuff comes with strings attached. And the longest of those strings is the one to your mailbox. By filling out just a few of those postcards, I did receive some free unnecessary baby things, but I also got myself on a never ending corporate mailing list. I swear, it's like the baby product companies can smell the pregnant women's mailboxes. They sniffed mine out in a big way because not a week goes by that I don't receive a sample mainstream parenting magazine or huge envelope full of coupons and "big savings" offers.

I could go on and on about how it's just plain stupid to fall for those "big savings" offers because you're not saving any money at all when you buy something based on emotion instead of need, (I'll go ahead and admit I'm stupidly, humanly guilty of it occasionally.) but for now, I'll try to focus on my biggest peeve of the corporate freebies, my free subscription to Baby Talk magazine, from the publishers of Parenting magazine. It might have been my own stupid fault for filling out those freebie postcards, but these free magazines are also widely distributed through obstetrician and pediatrician's offices, places where parents-to-be and new parents are more vulnerable to corporate marketing. Studies show that parents are more likely to follow advice they learn from their pediatrician's office, which includes

---3:15 PM-----

Monk emerges from his room, and we talk for a bit... read for a bit... and start making our pizza. I tell him it's going to be punk rock pizza, and he declares that he hates punk rock... I turn on THE STRIKE anyway... and notice he is visibly enjoying the music. "Do you like this music, Monk?" I ask. "Yes!" says Monk. "It's punk rock, dude..." I say. "Oh, then I HATE IT!" says Monk. Thinking quick, I recover "awww...actually, this is ska." "Oh, OK..." says Monk, "That's a funny name for a type of music." I gather ingredients with his help. He runs outside for a sprig of rosemary and 4 leaves of basil.



---4:00 PM-----

There's something about chopping vegetables while listening to someone sing "She's kicking ass for the working class." I'm not sure what it is, but some young upstart who claims to not like punk rock is not going to stand in the way of my enjoyment of it, dammit! I make the sauce for the pizza, and Monk helps me pour the ingredients for the crust into the bread machine.

---4:30 PM-----

Coley is awake, and I'm rolling the dough into a cookie sheet. Cole sees me doing this, runs to the hallway where the play-doh is stored high on a shelf, points up to it and says "DOUGH! DOUGH!" I pull the play-doh down... happy to oblige! By the way, Coley seems to like The Strike, as well.

---4:45 PM-----

Cole brings me a round pat of play-doh and says "Cake! Cake!" and, as I start to pretend to eat it he says "Bwow! bwow!" So, apparently, he has made a birthday cake for me and I'm to blow out the candles. Pretty cool, considering there has only been one birthday party that Cole has attended in the last 6 months. It's kind of neat that he's starting to use his imagination now. This is a new thing. It is very, very cool.

---5:30 PM-----

Monk is asking me to read Little Women to him. I oblige... but there is a very caustic odor emanating from the oven. I open the oven door and am rewarded with puffs of plasticine smelling smoke. Yick. I think Cole threw a piece of plastic in the over or something at some point and it's melted to the bottom rim. I take the pizza out and cool the oven down so I can safely remove the offending item.

--6:00 PM--



More play-doh play ensues. Cole keeps putting it in his mouth, and I keep putting it up as soon as he does so. then he runs to the hallway and screams that he wants "pay-oh? pay-oh?" So I keep giving him another chance. By now the floor is covered with chunks of play-doh anyway...and the play-doh is probably not nearly as toxic as the melted plastic air that we're breathing.

--6:30 PM--

I decide to relocate the playtime outside. We throw balls around, and check out the garden. Zucchini are growing, watermelon is vining. My garden resembles a small jungle... the tomato plants are growing all over the place and the fruit is heavy on the branches. I don't have enough cages, so it's all lush and bushy and beautiful,

--7:00 PM--

Pizza is done. Yum! It's very, very tasty. We all chow down. Steven wakes up.

--7:30 PM--

Monk is taking forever to eat. I'm playing play-doh with Cole again...

--8:00 PM--

Steven whisks Coley up so I can install House Party on the computer. Monk plays with his fire truck.

--8:15 PM--

Cole finds Monk's stuffed frog and exclaims "Fuck! Fuck!" (which is Cole-ease for Frog) Steven and I look at each other and laugh.

--8:30 PM--

I read some more Little Women to Monk...finish installing House Party, play more play-doh with Cole...and then play with pattern blocks with Cole. He hands me a triangle and says "ty-ankle?" and then he hands me the diamond and says "taco? taco?" and then he hands me the hexagon and says "chip? chip?"

--9:30 PM--

The living room is trashed, and it's time for Cole to go to bed. I get Monk set up to play Sims while I nurse Cole down.

--10:00 PM--

Monk tires of Sims, so I brush his teeth and send him to bed early. And here I am, writing, cleaning, surfing, and eating some yummy Tropical Source chocolate and watching the day draw to a close.

-drucilla b. blood is an ass kicking, no shit taking, no meat eating, punk rocking, writing, racking, fracking, homeschooling, breastfeeding mama to Monk and Cole.

resistance
is fertile



The greatest illusionist spectacle in the world no longer enchants us. We are certain that communities of joy will emerge from our struggle, here and now.

CrimethInc.

And for the first time, life will triumph over death.

OK, so CrimethInc isn't exactly pro-creation so it's kind of ironic I'm putting this in a parenting zine... I guess that's what they get for using such an awesome breastfeeding picture. Guns do scare the crap out of me (especially around kids), but how much does this picture ROCK??

starshine. / We will sleep entwined / two souls at peace... / this is love. //~Lisa Loveland

happy. If I wasn't committed to the benefits of breastfeeding I would have given up at this point. The thought crossed my mind: I can't do this, this is consuming me, this just isn't working. She can't be hungry all of the time; but then why won't anything else calm her? What is wrong with me and my baby? Is my milk not good enough? This definitely wasn't every-few-hours nursing that the baby books said a nurse-on-demand baby would want to nurse.

David's co-worker told him that breastfeeding is really hard. Sometimes it seems like they want to nurse every hour. David told her that Rosa-Maria was lucky if she got a break every hour. I gave a weak, apathetic smile when he told me this. It was the truth.

At three weeks she began to let up ever-so-slightly, she began to take breaks every now and then. I realized it was going to get better. We had gotten through the hard stuff. It really would get better.

At four weeks, the difference was magical. I was proud that I had kept with it, she had never had an artificial nipple of any kind. She was growing spectacularly. She was nursing every hour or so still, but only for about twenty minutes or so. I had a chance to pick up around the apartment and even take a bath occasionally. She gave us her first real smiles, the kind of smiles where she looks at you and you know there's no way that its gas because it is just too genuine. That was relief. She really is a happy girl.

At six weeks, she was a whole new baby. She nursed every couple of hours, and I didn't know what to do. I almost wondered if something was wrong, and was baffled by her not wanting the breast every time she made a beep. She was trying out her world now, exploring what her little body could do. She learned how to put her hands to her mouth to suck on them. At seven weeks, she rolled on to her belly for the first time, months ahead of schedule. At two months, she nursed every few hours and was grabbing for things to bring to her mouth and taste.

Looking back, I think she needed the constant stimulation and interaction that nursing provided in the early weeks, since she could not provide them for herself. She is a very alert, very aware baby and is constantly exploring more of the world around her. As she learns more and can do more she requires less stimulation from nursing and goes to the breast only for nourishment. I'm proud of her; she is not afraid to make demands.

I am glad that I stuck with nursing her the way that I did. Now, it is pure pleasure, I enjoy her sucking on my breast and the intimacy it provides, not to mention the convenience. I love the way she reaches her hand up to stroke my breast as she nurses, flexing her toes, her big blue eyes staring up at me. I can't imagine the things that I would have missed if I would have chosen bottle-feeding.



Manon in the Snow

Photo/Words by Sue Berger

Last November when the snow began to fall, Manon Elisabeth thought it was too good to be true. At 2 1/2, she had seen pictures of snow, indeed had even seen pictures of herself in snow, but had no memory of actually experiencing it. She spent about an hour on this snow man, even running inside for a baby carrot for his nose. Her sense of pride was palpable and I hated to warn her about the inevitable melt. The first couple of snows always melt and along with them, toddlers' snowmen. The good news was she lives in Minneapolis so within a week there was plenty more of the white stuff, enough this time to last till April.



For B. - Tiny little man / you want the world / and I give it / with warm, sweet mama milk / and



Early Breastfeeding Chronicles

I never questioned whether or not I would breastfeed; I never even entertained the idea of bottle-feeding my baby. It was something I was going to do, and that was just it. I was committed to breastfeeding as I knew that it was the best for my baby and for me, not to mention the idea of feeding my child anything besides human milk, especially if it came from an artificial plastic nipple, just seemed ludicrous. I was going to breastfeed, I knew that much, and never really gave it any more thought than that.

I guess it's important to mention that I have worked as a postpartum doula and am a student midwife, so I thought that with all of my supposed expertise in the area I was pretty aware of what I was getting myself into. I knew all about nursing the baby right after birth, proper latch-on and positioning techniques, and how many wet and shit-filled diapers a newborn baby should have per day. I knew what colostrum was and about when my milk should come in; I even knew all about getting engorged and what you could do about it. I knew it all. I had helped many mothers do the same thing. I was prepared. I never made it to a La Leche League meeting prenatally, and had never really talked "dirty" to anybody who had ever breastfed. If it wasn't for my mother, I wouldn't have even had any nursing pads on hand before my daughter was born.

Eva was nursing by the time she was a minute old. I looked down and saw the perfect textbook latch, lips flanged out around the areola, it was all as it should be. A blissed-out new mom and a beautiful, sweet baby. We knew what we were doing. It was meant to be this way. The first 24 hours of her life or so I spent on a hormonal cloud nine with my ten-fingers, ten-toes, big-wide-eyed wonderful little girl firmly planted on my breast and my husband passed out asleep next to us. It was heaven, aside from a little bit of pain with latch-on. It was all new, but it was all going just like the textbooks declared it would.

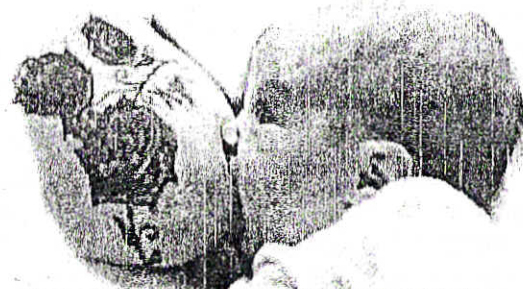
Then all Hell broke loose. She cried. She cried. And she cried some more. I hadn't slept since my contractions had started 40 or so hours before

your own place in my arms, / in my bed... / I will swaddle you in blankets / of twilight / and

and I was a wreck, my body turned upside down and inside out on this strange cryptic roller coaster, a sleep-deprived and hormone-induced wreck. She cried non-stop; this screaming, painful cry; she cried until she turned red, then purple, and even then she didn't stop. I offered her the breast, she took occasionally, then let up to cry some more. We changed her diapers. We checked her temperature and her clothing. We rocked her, we walked her, we talked to her. We tried singing. We tried everything. I started sobbing after 6 hours of this, I was sniveling in bed because I couldn't make her stop... I wanted to be such a good mom and I sure as hell wasn't if I didn't even know what would make my baby stop screaming. David was trying to comfort me but then he just started crying too and we all just stayed in bed crying our eyes out, swearing our lives were over and wondering what horrible mistake we had just made. What were we thinking having a kid? We aren't ready for this. Nobody told us it would be like this. Everybody said it would be hard but wonderful, they never mentioned things happening just like this.

I got my milk in soon after that, Thank God, all that she wanted was a full belly. My milk came in with a vengeance, on the early side of what the text books said and I was proud of that. I was engorged slightly but no real pain and she was doing okay at dealing with latching on to my firm, full breasts. She was happy. She drank my milk and was happy. It wasn't going to be all that bad.

She was content at my breast, in all other ways she had a furled brow for the first two weeks and generally looked pretty pissed off, although seemed relatively happy. She ate almost non-stop. I was wearing thin. She sucked and sucked on my nipples, I walked around the house with my breasts hanging out because all I did was feed her and switch sides. It felt like she was eating 23 hours a day. I would get into the shower and have to get out five minutes later to calm her with my breast. Out of desperation I tried to offer her a pacifier or even a finger to give my nipples a break but she would not have it. She liked my soft flesh and didn't care that my nipples felt water-logged, my brain was cloudy, my mind soaked with all of this. I was overwhelmed and drained. We would go out and I would keep her in the sling attached to my breast to keep her



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